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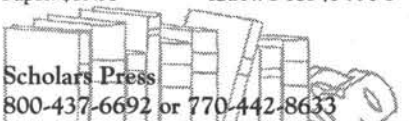

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COMMONWEAL

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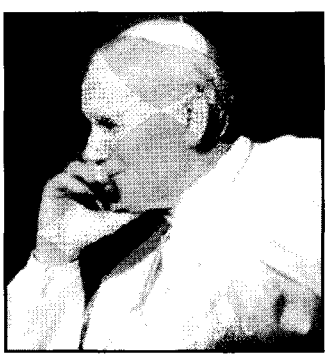

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To the Editors

Allies of inequality

Robert Senser's "Loaded at the Top" [December 1, 1995] is a timely exposé of dangerous trends toward further concentration of money and power. More can be added. The same anti-labor employers who are largely responsible for deunionization, loss of manufacturing jobs, increases in temporary and part-time jobs, etc., are the major factor in the weakening of institutions designed to even the odds—the National Labor Relations Board and the International Labor Organization. In Washington, with the help of compliant members of the GOP, they seek to trim the major powers of the NRLB, threatening to cut the board's appropriations if it does not knuckle under. In Geneva, the same forces, in alliance with developing nations, are working to block the attachment of "social clauses" to trade agreements, and to narrow the interpretation of labor standards.

I know that organized labor has its flaws. But surely we need a stronger workers' movement; if we are to get it a broader public has to understand the forces at work.

FRANK W. MCCULLOCH
Charlottesville, Va.

Monogamy forever

I hope I can clear up a point in the exchange between Francis DeBernardo and Margaret O'Brien Steinfels [Correspondence, November 17, 1995]. Ms. Steinfels argues that in *Virtually Normal* I see childlessness and sexual freedom as "positive aspects" of same-sex "marriage." She is mistaken. In the book, I explicitly cite child-rearing as an option for a married gay couple, and I mention monogamy in that context—"many lesbian and gay male relationships are virtual textbooks of *monogamous* commitment" (page 183); "the values of commitment, of *monogamy*, of marriage, of stability, are all posited as models for homosexual existence. And, indeed, of course, they are" (page 202; emphasis added). Part of the point of same-sex marriages is to cement monogamous tendencies in gay relationships.

Perhaps Ms. Steinfels is referring to a later passage, in which I argue that the openness of some gay male relationships—which are not, of necessity, "marriages"—can also be accompanied by the virtues of "honesty...flexibility, and...equality," which could "help strengthen and inform many heterosexual bonds." I am very careful not to argue that infidelity as such is a "positive aspect" of such informal relationships, let alone of actual marriages, gay or straight.

I remain as bemused as Mr. DeBernardo as to exactly what Ms. Steinfels's arguments against equal marriage rights are.

ANDREW SULLIVAN
Washington, D.C.

The reviewer replies:

Let me join the bemused crowd standing around my review of Andrew Sullivan's book [September 22, 1995]. There is also this statement on page 202, which I quoted in my review: "There is more likely to be greater understanding of the need for extramarital outlets between two men." To me, the obvious meaning seems to be that marital fidelity might not be a big issue for men in same-sex unions. Hence my question: "Why call it marriage at all?" Mr. Sullivan considers that he has argued carefully. Not carefully enough for me. Yes, he also describes on page 183 the value of "monogamous commitments" for gays and lesbians. That, he says in his letter, is his preference and the point of his arguing for the state to license same-sex unions.

One of the virtues of *Virtually Normal* is its honesty. Mr. Sullivan gives us arguments about homosexuality pro and con and forthright observations about a range of homosexual behaviors, understandings, and attitudes. The two contrasting citations suggest at least part of the range he describes.

The last part of my review (page 26) tackled and disagreed with Mr. Sullivan's very specific argument favoring the licensing of homosexual unions by the liberal state, as he defines it. Perhaps he has not read my argument there (and I will send him a copy). A lot more could and should be said on the whole question of same-sex unions and the protean definition of marriage it seems to require. The brief compass of a reply is not the place to set forth that argument. In the meantime, bemusement is not a bad state. Let us stand in it together.

MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS

Inclusive dialogue needed

Thank you for publishing John Cort's critical review of the inclusive-language *Psalms for Morning and Evening Prayer* [November 17, 1995]. Though many socially conscious Christians consider views like Cort's inherently sexist, my experience leads me to conclude that justice and the dignity of women are better served by an open debate on the issues.

Neither justice nor truth is well served when debate is foreclosed with the argument that the use of masculine language for God in the Old Testament is merely a matter of

(Continued on page 30)

CORRECTION In the article, "Is Poland Going Communist?" [December 15, 1995], the name of Poland's primate was misspelled. The correct spelling is Cardinal Jozef Glemp.

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Illustrations: Cover design, Emil Antonucci; p. 3, *Chronicle of America: From Prehistory to Today*, Clifton Daniel, editor (Dorling Kindersley, 1995); p. 14, Paul Valerry; pp. 20, 22, Ross, Rothco.

Back to basics

There has been a slight stirring of late hinting at a possible rapproachment between religion and liberalism. It is a hopeful, if often exasperating, sign.

Baptist theologian Harvey Cox assures *Nation* readers (January 1) that many religious people share the magazine's egalitarian social vision, and points out that the progressive tradition in American politics has long drawn on religious sources. "Progressives have begun to realize that to purge the public square of religion is to cut the roots of the values that nourish our fondest causes," Cox writes.

Too true. The *Nation*'s comments on religion, and especially Catholicism, are usually limited to a supercilious sneer, but Cox has positive things to say about the U.S. Catholic bishops and the pope's defense of the poor and immigrants. He rehearses the role of religion in the civil rights, antiwar, and social justice movements. Cox rightly warns that "politics is something more than administrative processing. Either it is linked to morality or it withers." Still, though caustic in his criticism of the religious right, he rarely challenges the *Nation*'s putatively left-wing readers. This trimming of religion's demands is most glaring in Cox's treatment of the single issue that broke up the historic coalition of political and religious progressives: He does not mention abortion.

In the neoliberal *Washington Monthly* (December, 1995), associate editor Amy Waldman takes a utilitarian tone. In her article "Why We Need a Religious Left," she argues that "Liberals have a secret weapon in the moral power of religion. They've used it in the past. Why not now?" Waldman bemoans the prejudices of secular liberals while chastising the religious left for its political incompetence. The eloquence of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops is praised, especially its 1984 pastoral letter on the economy. Still, Waldman seems largely ignorant of the long history of progressive Catholic social teaching and action, and patronizingly caricatures the "power of religion" as one of emotion rather than reason.

Waldman is aware of how abortion shattered progressive coalitions, noting that "prolife advocates are more likely than prochoice advocates to strongly support government assistance for the unemployed." But like Cox, Waldman seems more drawn to the cliches of prophetic religion than to the principled realism of religious ethics.

The most remarkable attempt to come to terms with the disaffection between rights-based liberalism and the religious sensibilities of many Americans appeared in the *New Republic*. Naomi Wolf's article "Our Bodies, Our Souls" (October 16, 1995) stunned her prochoice allies by calling for a reappropriation of a "moral framework" surrounding abortion and a recognition of the human life of the fetus as well as the moral culpability of those procuring abortions. Wolf's argument is finally unconvincing, for it sanctions abortion as an evil that nevertheless must be permitted to secure women's equality. Still, her honesty in judging current abortion practice a "failure," in conceding the dehumanizing effect of abortion-rights rhetoric, and in calling for prochoicers to "submit...to a morality beyond just our bodies and our selves," is an important step toward the res-

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urrection of a morally coherent and politically effective liberalism.

Cox, Waldman, and Wolf are right to seek a progressive future in a return to moral argument and religion. The hope of some liberals for a society dedicated to equality and justice but somehow unencumbered by a strong common moral code has proven to be a recipe for indifference, economic stratification, and a dangerous cynicism about government altogether. Liberalism's flirtation with moral relativism is coming to an end. The social justice and freedom traditionally celebrated by the left cannot be sustained if liberalism fails to articulate a shared morality and a compelling vision of the good life. By insisting that morality is intrinsically a common project, and that without it even the privileged are poor in spirit, religion has long provided a highly reliable description of reality. It can still provide the foundation for a very practical politics.

NOTEBOOK

Paul Baumann

FLYTES OF FANCY

'Brideshead' all over again

Santa was very good to me this year. I certainly didn't deserve it. Somehow—perhaps it was my incessant whining—she managed to get her more cinematic-minded elves to cobble together exactly what I had asked for. There lying under the tree, along with the keys to my new Maserati, were all six videocassettes of the now antique ten-hour BBC miniseries, *Brideshead Revisited*. Santa assured me that she had, through various subterfuges, purchased this extravagant indulgence at a considerable discount. I did not interrogate her about the details. Price was no object. In a weak moment—and I seem to be having more and more of them—I would have paid nearly anything. I'm obsessed.

Symptoms of this obsession began to appear about a year-and-a-half ago. I suspect it has to do with theological battle fatigue, exacerbated by my own *accidie*. I needed to be reminded of something—something transcending (literally and literarily) the next clash over a papal pronouncement, the last irksome liturgy, the course of church politics generally. I suppose I was longing for something that both mirrored my increasing fecklessness and yet tempered it. On impulse I borrowed the first cassette of *Brideshead* from the library. I found myself absorbed—absorbed utterly by Waugh's brilliant evocation of the potency of memory and longing —"for we possess nothing certainly except the past," as Waugh's narrator Charles Ryder confesses. Eight months later I watched all ten hours again. In between, I reread the novel (I had first read it fifteen years ago). Presently I'm reading the novel for a third time, and making my way through Waugh's letters.

Whenever my children see me eyeing a *Brideshead* cassette, much moaning and gnashing of teeth can be heard. "Noooo, not again," beseeches my eleven-year-old son. "That's the most boring movie ever made!" He has a point. The English journalist Christopher Hitchens has referred to the novel as *Brideshead Regurgitated*. Still—in my best Sebastian Flyte manner—I can't help myself.

Grappling with my addiction, I found some comfort in learning that Anthony Burgess was similarly afflicted. Though he selected *Brideshead* as one of the best novels of the last fifty years, he readily acknowledged its glaring flaws. "A sham and a snobbish sham," was the judgment of many critics, Burgess conceded. Waugh's romance with the doomed Flyte family was egregiously sentimental, the celebration of the landed aristocracy risible, the sex scenes ludicrous, the theology medieval by way of the Catholic Truth Guild. And a death-bed reconciliation to boot!

Yet Burgess confessed to having read *Brideshead* at least a dozen times. A dozen! As he noted, the novel somehow triumphs over its showy snobbery and idiosyncratic piety. "This is one of those disturbing novels in which the faults do not matter," Burgess professed. "It is a novel altogether readable and magical."

Inevitably, the movie suffers from many of the same excesses. Jeremy Irons, Laurence Olivier, Diana Quick, Claire Bloom, and Anthony Andrews seem nearly perfect to me now, but when I first saw *Brideshead* on PBS in the early 1980s, I couldn't watch it. I thought Ryder's melancholy unearned, the burnished settings preposterous, the homosexual infatuation and the foppishness irritating, Anthony Blanche's stutter maddening, and Sebastian's Teddy bear as inexcusable as his alcoholism. It wasn't until five or six years ago that I managed to sit through even one episode. And now? Have I mellowed, or merely gone soft in the head?

Probably both. In any event, John Mortimer's (of *Rumpole* fame) screenplay is remarkably faithful to the novel. Among my favorite scenes are Cordelia's disquisition on Sebastian's unsuspected holiness; Sebastian's earlier off-handed confession of faith—"they've [Catholics] got an entirely different outlook on life; everything they think important is different from other people"; Father Mowbry's hilarious attempts to catechize the ambitious Rex Mottram; and of course the epic domestic battle over ministering extreme unction to Lord Marchmain. Despite Waugh's absurd pretensions and prejudices, *Brideshead*'s redemptive sense of life's longings and love's possibilities is wonderfully all of a piece. "Perhaps all our loves are merely hints and symbols," Ryder speculates, "a hill of many invisible crests; doors that open as in a dream to reveal only a further stretch of carpet and another door; perhaps you and I are types and this sadness which sometimes falls between us springs from disappointment in our search, each straining through and beyond the other, snatching a glimpse now and then of the shadow which turns the corner always a pace or two ahead of us."

Any novel that can make that remarkable intimation believable is worth reading a few times. □

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JOHN GARVEY

GENDER & PRIESTHOOD

The Orthodox keep talking

After the recent Roman declaration that Catholics must regard it as infallible, a matter of the "deposit of faith," that only men can be priests, a Catholic friend asked if my Orthodox parish had gained any new members. I told him that although we may never see women priests in Orthodoxy, we would at least not call it an infallible truth.

This was meant lightly on both sides, but the Roman declaration will have very serious consequences, none of them intended by Rome. It will lead some people to leave the Catholic church; it will discourage many who stay; it will hearten people who already agree. None of these are the truly important consequences. No doubt it disheartens advocates of capital punishment to see it increasingly challenged by bishops and the pope, and racists left the church during the sixties. A defender of the Vatican statement could point to these things, with some justice. The truth of a statement does not depend on how a great many people, even well-intentioned but wrong people, feel about it. The idea that people might be discouraged, might leave, is not in itself a strong argument.

But the problem goes deeper than that. The declaration tries to end a discussion that really needs to happen, and it will not succeed in doing this. And the attempt to invoke infallibility will cause the most serious questioning of the concept of infallibility since it was argued—and accepted—by Vatican I in 1869-70.

The latter result is fine, as far as I am concerned; as an Orthodox I think papal infallibility is a heresy. There is a possibly apocryphal story that when the English Catholic historian Lord Acton returned from Rome after the declaration of infallibility he was asked if he would leave the Roman Catholic church, and he answered, "Just because the pope has changed his religion, I see no reason to change mine." On a more serious level, Acton also said that the defenders of infallibility would have a hard time with the case of Pope Honorius, who—speaking from the chair of Peter in matters of faith and morals—proclaimed the monothelite heresy to be true, and was condemned by a later council. According to the letter of Vatican I, this should not have been able to happen. Catholics have argued that Honorius meant well and was trying to be an orthodox Catholic, but this is silly: no heretic sets out to be wrong. In any case, a questioning of infallibility may have unsettling effects, but if honestly done it will be all to the good.

The more serious consequence is that it tries to end a discussion that needs to happen. Orthodoxy is considered a more conservative church than the Catholic church by many people. I think it can be safely said that the great majority of Orthodox would oppose the ordination of women. But some bishops have made it clear that the question is not just a Western problem; it must be considered, and a significant minority of Orthodox theologians support either the ordination of women or the serious consideration of the question. Even theologians who oppose the ordination of women have acknowledged that Orthodoxy must come up with better arguments than the current ones.

This is a matter of simple honesty. The ordination of men only to the priesthood certainly has the weight of tradition behind it, and for Orthodox this is one vital element—but there are others. The major question is whether this is something as essential to priesthood as bread and wine are to the Eucharist, or water to baptism; or whether it is a matter of church discipline, like fasting laws or the age of ordination to the priesthood. If it were only the latter, it could be changed. If it is the former, better arguments than "Jesus chose only men to be apostles" need to be offered. The argument made by some proponents of women's ordination that if priests are "icons" of Jesus, then only Jews under the age of thirty-three can be ordained, is frivolous. But there is an element of truth to at least one aspect of the argument: Jesus' maleness may indeed be essential to what priesthood is about—but if so, why not his Judaism, which was absolutely essential? And if this was transcended in the understanding that the Israel of God now includes Christians, why is this same expansion not applied also to gender? Finally, is the priest meant to be an icon of Christ in a unique way—that is, aren't all human beings, male and female, meant to represent the fullness of the mystery of the Incarnation?

If the restriction of priesthood to men is maintained as essential, reasons involving the symbolism involved in gender will have to be made more compelling—for example, the apparent arbitrariness of fatherhood, its lack of obvious necessity, may have to be discussed. Another interesting and insufficiently explored area is the fact that many of the proponents of women's ordination oppose any sense of hierarchy (however gendered), which certainly goes against the stream of Christian tradition. When we talk about this issue, we are talking, often, about more than this *specific* issue. The question will obviously not be solved in this column. I believe that Rome meant to head off the prospect of some crazed bishop ordaining women and presenting Rome with an Anglican situation; according to some accounts, a few women may have been ordained in Czechoslovakia, during the Communist persecution of religion. But if this is what Rome intended, it could hardly have dealt with it in a more ham-handed and insensitive way. One Catholic priest, a conservative on this issue, said to me, "When they do these things, don't they understand that we are the people who have to mop up after them?" □

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CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION ■ *Is the ban on ordaining women infallible as Rome said in October? Our response was framed in an editorial (December 1, 1995). Below we have asked several eminent theologians to discuss diverse aspects of the question. In our February 9 issue an essay by Richard R. Gaillardetz will look at the responsibilities of pastoral ministers in presenting the teachings of the church in controverted matters.*

Infallibility I & II

John T. Ford

On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, the distinguished American church historian John Tracy Ellis remarked: "It is doubtful that any event in the history of the modern church ever gave rise to a greater flow of misinformation than the [First] Vatican Council." Vatican I (1869-70), when remembered at all, is often summarily characterized as the council that proclaimed that "the pope is infallible."

This commonplace characterization, however, is a prime example of the misinformation that has plagued Vatican I from its own day to the present. In treating the teaching office of the pope, Vatican I did not claim that "the pope is infallible," but stated that, under certain specified conditions, the pope can exercise "that infallibility which the Divine Redeemer willed to bestow on his church." In other words, "infallibility" is not a personal attribute of the pope, but a charism divinely given to the church—a charism which the pope may utilize only on behalf of the church in deciding major questions of faith or morals.

To some, such a distinction may seem theological hairsplitting; however, there are important consequences: if one says that "the pope is infallible," it suggests that his every pronouncement is unchangeable; in contrast, stating that "the pope can exercise infallibility in specific circumstances" implies that some, but certainly not all, papal decisions come within the scope of infallibility.

But what is the "scope" of infallibility? In attempting to answer this question, a careful examination of the text of *Pastor aeternus*—the document which presented the council's teaching on the "infallible magisterium of the Roman pontiff"—shows that Vatican I did not give a definition of *what* infallibility is, but rather described *how* infallibility can be exercised; namely, when the pope "speaks *ex cathedra*, as pastor and teacher of all Christians." In other words, if the pope is to exercise infallibility, he must do so in a formal way with the evident intention of binding all Christians.

But what kind of church teaching can come under infallibility? *Pastor aeternus* specified: "doctrine concerning faith or morals that must be held by the universal church." This answer implicitly distinguished "doctrine that must be *held*" (*doctrina tenenda*) from "doctrine that must be *believed*" (*doctrina credenda*). The Latin periphrastic is important, insofar as Vatican I did not restrict the exercise of infallibility to matters of faith (*credenda*), but allowed the possibility that infallibility might extend to "doctrine that must be *held*" (*tenenda*), even though that teaching is not, strictly speaking, a matter of divine revelation.

This distinction between *credenda* and *tenenda* caused considerable discussion, not only during but also after Vatican I. On the one hand, for example, were people like Henry Edward Manning, the archbishop of Westminster, one of the foremost advocates of infallibility at the council, who considered practically every papal decision as potentially coming under the scope of infallibility. On the other hand were people like John Henry Newman who advocated a "principle of minimizing" that included very few papal declarations within the scope of infallibility. Although their views on infallibility were quite different, both Manning and Newman were subsequently named cardinals.

Such diversity in interpreting the scope of infallibility continued for decades. For example, some theologians tried to read infallibility back into history and considered papal pronouncements, such as the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) and the condemnation of Luther (1520), as exercises of infallibility. Other theologians, however, pointed out that *Pastor aeternus* did not make any retroactive judgments; thus, any attribution of infallibility to previous papal decisions is inevitably a matter of interpretation. One case, however, where theologians of varying views found common ground was in recognizing the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 as an exercise of infallibility by the pope in consultation with the bishops of the world.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a few theologians argued that various papal decisions, such as the condemnation of modernism by Pius X in 1907, were tantamount to an exercise of infallibility; however, such attempts to extend the scope of infallibility beyond matters of revelation received comparatively little support among theologians. Between the First and Second Vatican Councils, the single universally recognized papal exercise of infallibility was an-

John T. Ford, C.S.C., *professor of theology at the School of Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, contributed the article on "Infallibility" to* The New Dictionary of Theology *(Michael Glazier, 1987).*

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other Marian dogma—the Assumption—proclaimed by Pius XII in 1950.

Vatican II (1962-65) revisited the topic of infallibility in *Lumen gentium* (25) which acknowledged that the college of bishops could exercise infallibility under certain conditions: "Although individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, nevertheless, when the bishops, although dispersed throughout the world, but preserving the bond of communion among themselves and with Peter's successor, authoritatively teach a matter of faith and morals and so are in agreement about a doctrine that must be held definitively, they infallibly proclaim the doctrine of Christ."

In this statement, Vatican II, like Vatican I earlier, spoke of the scope of infallibility as "doctrine that must be held" (*tenenda*); however, a statement in the very next paragraph of *Lumen gentium* described infallibility as co-extensive with the "deposit of divine revelation, which must be religiously guarded and faithfully expounded." In effect, this description seemed to restrict the scope of infallibility to doctrine which must be believed (*credenda*). Such an interpretation seemed to be corroborated by the council's further statement that "when either the Roman pontiff, or the body of bishops with him, define a teaching, they make this pronouncement in accord with revelation itself."

In retrospect, it may seem surprising that "collegiality" rather than infallibility was a bone of contention at Vatican II. However, given the conciliar teaching on collegiality, the exercise of infallibility by the college of bishops can be considered a logical extension of the teaching of Vatican I: if the pope on specific occasions can exercise infallibility, then the college of bishops in communion with the pope can under specific conditions also exercise infallibility.

A highly publicized challenge to infallibility came on the centennial of Vatican I with the publication of Hans Küng's *Infallible? An Inquiry* (Doubleday, 1971). Reacting to what he considered the slow pace of postconciliar renewal in general, and to *Humanae vitae* in particular, Küng cited a litany of papal errors that purportedly demonstrated that "infallible statements" are impossible.

Although Küng's challenge to infallibility created considerable theological debate, it was flawed on a number of counts. First, Küng's list of "papal errors" consisted of *tenenda*—matters which various popes had indeed taught, but as teachings to be obeyed or *held*, not necessarily as matters to be *believed*; most theologians readily granted that such *tenenda* were teachings which, however important at the time they were issued, still were decisions that could be changed.

What Küng had, in effect, attacked was the exaggerated interpretations of people like Manning and W. G. Ward, who reportedly would have liked an "infallible papal pronouncement" for breakfast every morning along with his tea and the *Times*. In contrast, minimalist interpretations—inherited from people like Newman—that restricted the scope of infallibility to *credenda* were basically untouched by Küng's "inquiry."

Nonetheless, the "infallibility debate" of the 1970s did indicate an anomaly about *credenda* and *tenenda*: where the former is limited to doctrines that must be believed because they are taught by the church to be matters of divine revelation, *tenenda* is a broad category, extending from doctrines "closely related to faith" through such matters as canonizations—which at least from a ceremonial standpoint are among the most solemn of papal proclamations—to decisions dealing with such matters as liturgical practice and the approbation of religious communities.

Theologians have generally insisted that *tenenda*, particularly those concerned with ecclesiastical discipline, are not, strictly speaking, matters of faith. Nonetheless, *tenenda* have an important role in the liturgical and communal life of the church, insofar as they provide directives for worship and action.

Theologians have also generally acknowledged that some *tenenda* are so closely related to the deposit of faith that there may come a time when what were once regarded as *tenenda* may be judged to be matters of *credenda*. For example, before 1950, the doctrine of the Assumption was often considered as *tenenda*; in effect, the definition of 1950 proclaimed it to be *credenda*.

More recently, in 1989, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith began requiring a new "Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity" of those called to exercise an office in the

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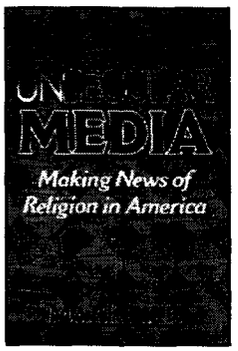
UNSECULAR MEDIA

Making News of Religion in America

By MARK SILK



CHAMPAIGN, Illinois — "Mark Silk uncovers the journalistic mind as only a working journalist can. He ties that mind to America's religious culture as only a trained historian can and challenges all the standard allegations about the 'secularity of the media' as no one else ever has," said William Dean, author of *The Religious Critic in American Culture.*

Silk, a staff writer for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, is the author of a new book, *Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion in America*, published by the University of Illinois Press."

Unsecular Media, which is available in hardcover at a price of $19.95, explodes the long-standing myth that contemporary media reflects a secular bias, and counters the belief that journalists are members of a "cultural elite" with liberal leanings or anti-religion prejudices.

Silk examines contemporary news coverage, showing how it reflects the religion-based values that most Americans share. These values, he maintains, are embodied in moral formulas, or "topoi," that include good works, tolerance, hypocrisy, false prophecy, inclusion, supernatural belief, and spiritual decline. He likens those "topoi" to tools used by journalists to make the huge variety of American religious life morally comprehensible to a mass audience.

In addition to his newspaper duties, Silk teaches religion and the media at Emory University and is a member of the American Academy of Religion's Ad Hoc Committee for the Public Understanding of Religion. His new book is part of a series, *Public Expressions of Religion in America*, edited by Conrad Cherry of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis.

U of I Press officials reported the series, which is published in cooperation with Cherry's institution, is supported by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

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name of the church. The first part of the "Profession of Faith" consisted of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed; the second part enumerated three "types of truth": (1) *credenda*—"everything contained in the written or traditioned word of God and proposed by the church as divinely revealed, either in solemn judgment or by the ordinary and universal magisterium"; (2) "everything definitively proposed [by the church] concerning faith or morals"; (3) "everything which either the Roman pontiff or the college of bishops teach when they exercise their authoritative magisterium, even if they intend to proclaim this teaching in a nondefinitive way."

In other words, the expanded "Profession of Faith" distinguished two categories of *tenenda*: (1) matters which are *definitively* proposed and (2) matters which are *authoritatively* proposed, albeit in a nondefinitive way. While theologians generally acknowledge that some *tenenda* are more important than others, in 1990, a committee of the Catholic Theological Society of America pointed out that the application of the profession's distinction seems "indeterminate or ambiguous."

However, this first category of *tenenda* is evident in the affirmative reply of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on October 28, 1995, to the question: "Should the doctrine, definitively proposed as *tenenda* in the apostolic letter, *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, that the church has no ability to confer priestly ordination on women, be understood as related to the deposit of faith?" The response then went on to assert that this teaching requires "definitive assent" as a doctrine "proposed infallibly by the ordinary and universal magisterium."

The congregation's response effectively initiates a new chapter in the history of infallibility. On the one hand, theologians favoring a "principle of minimizing" will have difficulty generalizing about what apparently is a unique instance of infallibility being officially extended to *tenenda*. Simultaneously, theologians who maintain that *tenenda* come within the scope of infallibility will have difficulty in drawing the line between the two new categories of *tenenda*. However, as this brief history of infallibility during the past century-and-a-quarter shows, such interpretive variance is hardly new.

Regardless of the directions theological discussion about the scope of infallibility may take in the future, it is important to bear in mind the essential issue: infallibility is a charism divinely given to the church to preserve and proclaim God's revelation. □

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Responses to Rome

Elizabeth A. Johnson

Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., is professor of theology at Fordham University, president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the author of She Who Is *(Crossroad).*

Thanks to the careful, quick work of canon lawyers and theologians, it has become clear that the Vatican's recent *Responsum ad dubium* is not itself infallible teaching. It has the status of a statement of a Vatican congregation, no more, no less. Yet the confusing use of infallibility makes equally clear that Rome is determined to close the question of women's ordination as it is maturing in the church.

Consulting the faithful on the matter of this doctrine would yield a different outcome, for interesting combinations of women's giftedness in ministry, pastoral need, and a deep sense of the injustice of exclusion lead many in the church to entertain the possibility of this development. Instead of working patiently and wisely with the question, however, institutional leadership short-circuits what may well be a God-intended development of doctrine and tries to impose its answer by authoritarian *fiat*.

I get the impression that the recourse to sheer power is happening because those who oppose women's ordination are losing the argument on the field of reasoning. These reasons are basically three: the example of Jesus, unbroken tradition, and the need for iconic resemblance.

Regarding the first, let it be stated as plainly as possible that Jesus never ordained twelve men, thus setting up an all-male priesthood. Such an interpretation is an anachronism projected backward onto the Gospels in the light of later development. In truth, biblical scholarship demonstrates that Jesus never ordained anyone; that a distinction must be made between the Twelve (who had no long-term successors), the apostles, and the disciples; and that women were among the most active and faithful of apostles and disciples. Furthermore, even if Jesus did ordain twelve men, this is no warrant for the church not to ordain women. The Spirit guides the church to do many things that Jesus did not, according to the needs of the gospel in the course of history.

Regarding the second, history is replete with examples of unbroken tradition-breaking due to the moral sensibilities of believers, the insights of critical thinkers, and careful searching on the part of the teaching office, all converging in the context of cultural change. At one time it was official church teaching that it was unlawful for married couples to take pleasure in the marital act; that killing infidels was a way to salvation; that taking interest on a loan was forbidden; that slavery was permissible; that discrimination against Jewish people was legitimate; that biblical scholars could not use historical critical methods on Scripture texts.

How do we discern whether the teaching on women's ordination can be open to similar development? In *The Survival of Dogma*, Avery Dulles adduces the following principle: "No doctrinal decision of the past directly solves a question that was not asked at the time." For example, the fact that Paul, quoted by Trent, asserts that Adam was a single individual cannot be used to refute modern science's idea of polygenism; the question had not even arisen yet. By extension, "whenever the state of the evidence on any question materially changes, you have a new question that cannot be fully answered by appealing to old authorities." The stated reason women were not ordained throughout the centuries was that they were inferior, or "defective males" (Aquinas). That reason has crumbled in our day.

Regarding the third, let it be plainly stated that women are icons of Christ, *imago Christi*, in every essential way. There is a natural resemblance between women and Jesus Christ in terms of a common humanity and participation in divine grace. To teach otherwise is a pernicious error that vitiates the power of baptism. The naive physicalism that reduces resembling Christ to being male is so deviant from Scripture and so theologically distorted as to be dangerous to the faith itself.

The reasons, thus, do not hold up, try as one might to entertain them. According to traditional Catholic teaching, the human faculty of judgment is not free, unlike our will. We can give genuine assent only to what presents itself to our mind as true: "The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power" (Vatican II, *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, 1). If a declared teaching or practice continuously jars our mind as missing the mark, as in the present case, it is our responsibility to explore and express the reasons why. This resistance is not to be equated with disloyalty or rebellion, let alone lack of faith, but with a form of loyalty and service. One is reminded of Saint Catherine of Siena.

Responsible dissent begins as an act of conscience and continues as part of a committed life in the church. It is not habitual but arises in particular instances out of concern for the truth. It requires a certain discipline in order to be done well. The value guiding it in all cases should be the common good. Differing with institutional authorities in the church must always be *for* the church, for the present and future growth of the whole community in truth and love. With that controlling value in place, several discrete norms shape individual and corporate dissent.

- Responsible dissent takes place in the context of a deep and abiding *assent* to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the church's tradition which interprets it.
- At the outset, the presumption is in favor of the particular teaching. One should try through prayer and study with an open mind to appreciate the reasons for the present position. If, through this effort, serious and well-founded reasons for holding a contrary opinion persist so that it is impossible

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in integrity of mind and heart to agree, then one must disagree.

- There should be self-criticism about motivation, testing whether dissent is driven by innate hostility or some other hidden agenda, rather than by sincere conviction of the truth.
- Since public dissent can detract from certain community values, it must be weighed and decided that the good to be accomplished is in proportion to the possible harm that might result.
- The manner of dissent should be respectful of the leadership office in the church, not impugning it although disagreeing in this instance.
- Presentation of one's views should also respect the consciences of others in the community who disagree, and the situation of those who have not investigated or cannot investigate complex issues.
- While clear in resistance, the voice of dissent should be inviting a dialogue, rather than competitive in a win-lose way. The overall purpose is to promote the truth in love by urging the teaching office of the church to deeper listening and reflection.

Over the years, informed, responsible disagreement has been a gift to the church whereby the criticism born of love has empowered growth. In my view, the recent noninfallible statement about the alleged infallibility of the tradition about women's ordination calls for just this sort of response. □

Michael Novak

Michael Novak holds the George Frederick Jewett Chair in Religion and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute.

What progressives these days are not doing is trying to offer contemporary reasons why Jesus did as he did in ordaining only males, and why the tradition of the church in holding to that practice seemed until the last twenty years entirely reasonable.

As C.S. Lewis noted, virtually every religion ordains priestesses; but not Christianity—and there are reasons for that uniqueness, worth meditating on.

A priest is not a minister. In ministerial roles, women do as well as, if not better than, men. The priestly role is cultic and representational. Religions in which there are no priests, only ministers, will of course ordain women.

The Catholic church in particular is fleshly and incarnational in its fundamental doctrines. The complementarity of the genders, and the differences between them, are crucial to its self-understanding. Catholicism is not a gnostic religion that treats the gendered body as insignificant. It is not a spiritualizing religion that attends only to our souls, not our bodies. It validates the female as female, the male as male. It celebrates the different roles of male and female both in the order of nature and in the order of grace.

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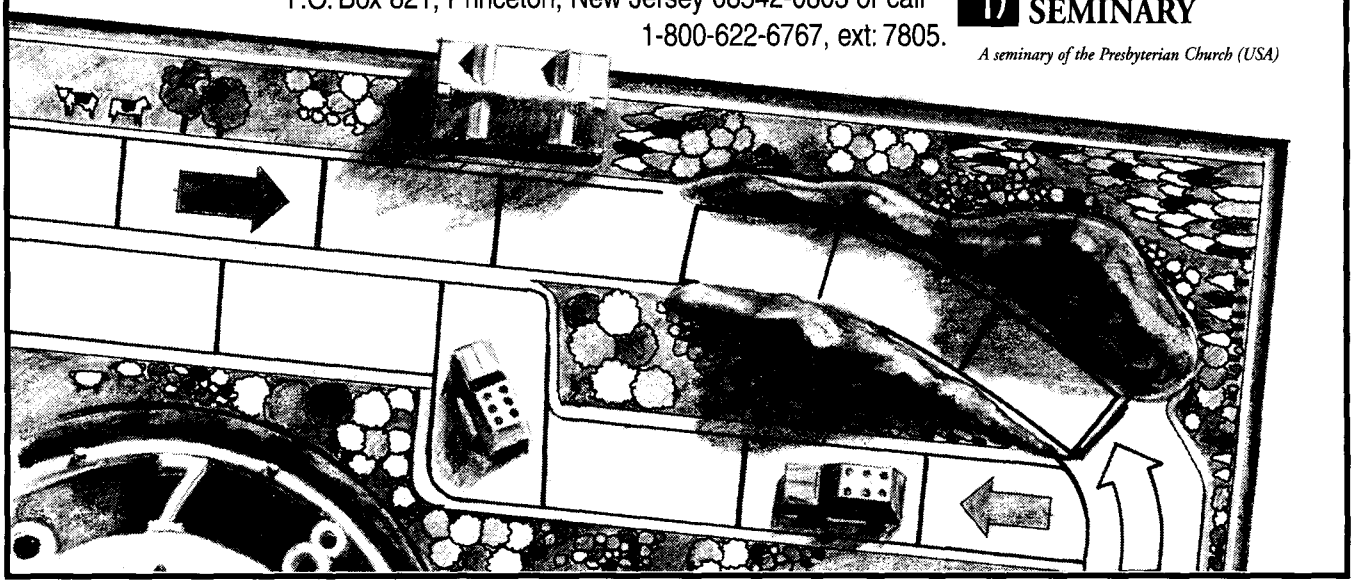

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On such matters, the Catholic faith has often been a scandal to sophisticated persons of every era. Its theology of the body, celebrated in its liturgies (Eastern and Western), has often been a stumbling block to those who inquired of her.

Each woman and each man is made in the image of God, the church teaches, but not in isolation from one another. On the contrary, our bodies are nuptial, made for the union of male and female. It is in their nuptial union especially that the full image of God is shown forth.

That is why the practice of celibacy is a searing self-sacrifice, justified only because of its sublimation of the flesh into a nuptial communion of a different order: the communion of a male with the church, the bride of Christ; and of a female with Christ, her bridegroom. Absent this nuptial reality, a life consecrated to celibacy would make little sense.

What God is like we do not see, but in his revelation of himself God persistently used engendered symbols: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one in their communion. And the gender of these symbols seems to matter. Aside from being nonhistorical, "Mother, Daughter, and Holy Spirit" would have communicated a very different set of relations and a very different idea of God.

Further, had the second person of the Trinity become incarnate as a woman rather than as a man, the moral and cultural impact of Christian teaching would have been quite different. Presumably, God had a *point* in becoming incarnate as a male. By this path, as both Friedrich Nietzsche and Henry Adams have observed, the fierce warrior-male was humbled and taught instead to be a gentle man. A transvaluation of ancient values was accomplished.

The Catholic faith is a faith of history, the concrete, and the flesh. In ways not yet fully reflected upon, God's trinitarian self-revelation is inextricably entwined in the differences and complementarity between male and female; and so is his self-revelation in the Incarnation. Pope John Paul II is asking us to make this gender-alive dimension of our faith the object of renewed reflection, meditation, and inquiry. Creative speculation is called for, in faithful religious assent to a tradition that is not only providential but guided by the Holy Spirit.

The future of churches (or parts of churches) that are now ordaining priestesses is not yet clear; we should watch and learn. Nonetheless, we may hazard some informed guesses about what the logic of ordaining females might lead to: a quite different theology of the body; a quite different doctrine of Incarnation and the resurrection of the body; a different symbolic approach to the Trinity; a depreciation of the role of Mary, the mother of God; a different theology of the sacraments; and a radical devaluation of the tacit wisdom embodied in tradition.

A church of priestesses might be tempted to become a church of the "spirit," rather than the far more humble, limited, despised, and rejected Incarnation. The figure of Jesus Christ, a male, will become "problematic" to it—as it already was to the Women's Ordination Conference during its 1995 meeting. In short, we should anticipate a different and quite modern gnosticism, appealing to many, spreading rapidly, and ordaining its own priestesses and establishing its own counter-church (probably *within* the true church because that's cheaper).

I am struck, finally, by increasingly frequent appeals on the part of progressives to "the spirit of Vatican II." As one who covered two sessions of Vatican II in the flesh, I remember painstaking arguments over the letter of Vatican II—over its precisely worded documents. Reached in a very human manner, guided by the Holy Spirit, these precise words are a metaphor for the Incarnation itself, finite embodiments of self-conscious faith. The council's actual words deliberately and clearly protected the traditional role of the bishop of Rome as the confirmer of our common faith, communion with whom is a sign of our faith's unity and fidelity. □

Nasira Alma

A Lamb in Lion Time

Where the sun ripped itself away,
the sky bleeds. I shelter in dune grass.
The cat has grown in grace, felling
a great dane. He gnaws on the pelvis.

I came into the world bruised, not innocent,
saw him rampant at noon, his burnished mane
flung to the wind. The swagger of
his shoulders terrified me. I have bleated
at his heels ever since.

In dreams, I sniff out deer spoor. The cat
follows me to the place. I kill and walk
in grace. Then I groan back to consciousness,
drenched in my sweat.

I know what will happen when it suits him
to lie at my side...not what is preached
from pulpits. Not a love-in. Not peace.
I will be seized and shaken by his jaws.

The cat will eat me live. How gloriously
awakened, bedded on his tongue, thrilling
to the drill of his teeth through my meat.

Tightness will yield. Cowardice will dissolve
and the clutchiness of a blind follower.
Better—oh, much much better!—to be
in him than without him.

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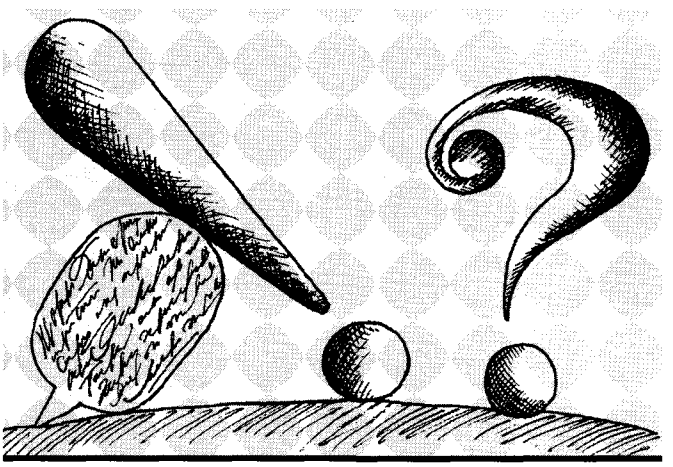
Lisa Sowle Cahill

Lisa Sowle Cahill is professor of theology at Boston College. Her Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics *will be published this year by Cambridge University Press.*

In my judgment, the CDF's *responsum* is an authoritative but noninfallible interpretation of *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*. *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* did not itself explicitly claim infallibility, and is not now said to be infallible in its own right. Rather, the CDF and the pope maintain that the prohibition against the ordination of women presented in *Ordinatio* is the infallible teaching of the ordinary magisterium.

Theoretically, the "ordinary magisterium" may be infallible when and if the body of bishops worldwide has always taught the same thing. Yet arguments about the infallibility of the ordinary magisterium are, in the nature of the case, dicey, due to ambiguity about the degree of agreement necessary to constitute the requisite unanimity; unclarity about how unanimity is to be tested, particularly if the Vatican avoids acknowledging divergent views; the fact that changes in teachings have risen and will arise in determinate historical eras; and the fact that the very nature of a question like the ordination of women can differ substantially by social setting.

How are we to know whether we are disputing a teaching just prior to or during an era of change? If unanimity erodes, was the teaching previously infallible, but afterwards not? For example, there are reports that women were ordained in Czechoslovakia during the years of Communist repression. Are there a number of bishops in sympathy with this apparently isolated instance? Did it ever happen in the past? Or could it be symptomatic of a radically new consciousness in the church regarding the status of women, whose inferiority was once taken for granted? If any of these questions can be answered in the affirmative, the very grounds on which such ordinations are said to be "infallibly" prohibited by the ordinary magisterium are called into question.



In sum, the *responsum* may be "authoritative" insofar as it represents the position of ecclesiastical authorities who command respect, but it is not infallible in itself, nor does it even claim to be.

It has been reported that the authors of the document apparently intended that it reverse public opinion not only in the United States, but in countries like Germany and Austria, where petitions favoring women's priestly ordination have recently been signed by millions of Catholics. The CDF evidently aims to warn supportive theologians into silence, and to motivate the silent maiority of bishops to take a hard line with dissenters.

But it is extremely unlikely that the document will fulfill these aims. The social roles of women and our own expectations about gender equality have changed so drastically in the twentieth century, at least in the industrialized democracies, that there is no turning back the tide. Of particular note is the fact that church documents themselves, while remaining finally ambivalent on the status of women, have to a remarkable degree supported these changes. Papal writings, including *Familiaris consortio*, *Mulieris dignitatem*, and the "Letter to Women" preceeding last fall's UN conference in Beijing, have promulgated women's rights in documents addressed to traditional societies and to developing nations as well as to Europe and North America.

Some supporters of women's ordination, especially those for whom Vatican II is a formative memory, will be increasingly angry at the church for what is regarded as further betrayal and intransigence. Other feminists have ceased to care about ordination in an institution from which they are already so thoroughly alienated that they are seeking innovative forms of Catholic ministry and liturgy where their gifts are recognized. Those of a more stoic temperament will regard this as just another cross to bear while awaiting the slow fruition of seeds planted by Vatican II. Few who accepted the idea of women priests last September will be turned around by October's pronouncement. Some opponents of women's ordination will be confirmed in their own views and encouraged in their condemnations of others, leading to further polarization of "orthodox" and "dissenting" Catholics.

But what really worries me is the reaction of the younger generation, including college and high-school students, as well as little girls and boys of altar-server age. We, their parents and teachers, and even the church in many of its evolving ideas and practices, have taught young men and women to participate cooperatively and with equal mutual respect in family and society. We tell our daughters and our sons that they can be anything they want to be, so long as they have the requisite talent and determination. My fear is that as these young people mature they will not even bother to be angry with or work to change a church which is so blatantly irrelevant to their personal and social aspirations, and to their intimations of spiritual transcendence. They will simply walk away. □

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Joseph A. Komonchak

Joseph A. Komonchak, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, teaches theology in the Department of Religion and Religious Education, The Catholic University of America.

Some classic and elementary rules for the interpretation of magisterial documents permit one to say the following about the formal authority of the "Reply" of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith" (CDF) as to the meaning and authority of Pope John Paul II's letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*. First, the reply itself is not an infallible text: the CDF does not possess such authority and does not here claim it. Second, the papal letter is not an infallible, *ex cathedra*, exercise of the papal office, something made quite clear in the press releases presumably prepared within the CDF and issued by the Vatican to accompany both texts.

Third, the CDF's reply is of lesser authority than the papal letter; it does not itself increase the force of the latter but simply seeks to clarify it. It takes the form of a precise and affirmative answer to a precise question: does the doctrine taught in *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* belong to the deposit of faith? The vague verb "belongs to" is not clarified. To this answer there is appended a second paragraph in explanation of the affirmative answer. Formally, this explanation may be considered of less authority than the judgment contained in the affirmative reply.

It is only in this explanatory paragraph that the word "infallibly" occurs. It qualifies, not the apostolic letter of the pope nor the CDF text, but the presentation of the doctrine by "the ordinary and universal magisterium." This phrase refers to the everyday exercise of their teaching office by the universal episcopate, described in *Lumen gentium* 25: "Although individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, still when—even though dispersed but maintaining communion among themselves and with the successor of Peter and authoritatively teaching matters of faith and morals—they agree upon a judgment as definitively to be held, they infallibly state the teaching of Christ."

At one point the CDF goes beyond the pope's letter. The pope had said merely that the doctrine excluding women from priestly ordination was "maintained by the constant and universal tradition of the church and firmly taught by the magisterium in recent documents." The CDF adds to these a reference to the written word of God and to the infallible presentation of the doctrine by the ordinary and universal magisterium.

The reference to the written word of God may be said to be present in earlier sections of *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, where the pope refers to the practice of Christ and the Apostles. The argument that the doctrine has been infallibly presented by the ordinary and universal magisterium does not appear to be even implicit in the papal letter. Its status, then, is that of a judgment of the CDF.

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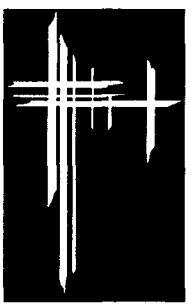
The assent required is said to be "definitive." It is characterized not as "believing" but "holding" or "maintaining." It is curious that the verb "believe" is not used here, since the CDF reply says that the doctrine belongs to the deposit of the faith and the pope's letter had said it concerns the divine constitution of the church.

Neither *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* nor the CDF reply states that to deny this doctrine constitutes heresy; and indeed the precise meaning of "heresy," as defined by canon 751 of the Code of Canon Law, does not apply in the case of such disagreement. It is clear, however, that both documents insist that the teaching is one which requires definitive assent from the faithful on the grounds that it is based upon the word of God and the church's constant and universal tradition, with the CDF adding that it has been infallibly presented by the universal ordinary magisterium.

This last claim is the one on which theologians will perhaps concentrate their attention. It may be that an ecumenical sensitivity has led Rome not to reassert this doctrine by way of an *ex cathedra* statement of the pope but by way rather of an act by which Peter once again "confirms" his brethren (*see*, Lk. 22:32). This would seem an effort to give the restatement a more collegial appearance than an act of the pope alone. A difficulty that many people are experiencing is due in part to the lack of information about what effort was made, either by scholarship or by consultation of the episcopate, to discern what has been or is the definitive teaching of the worldwide episcopate. As the acts of both Vatican Councils make clear, the pope is morally bound to a serious effort to make a determination of the consensus of the churches and of the bishops before proceeding to a definitive statement. No scholarly work is known to me that has established that the teaching of the worldwide episcopate, past or present, on the subject of the ordination of women fulfills all the elements included in *Lumen gentium* 25, particularly the requirement that the bishops teach this doctrine as something "definitively to be held," as distinct, say, from something which they simply took for granted. And if any sort of private consultation of the episcopate has been undertaken recently, it apparently did not include large numbers of the bishops.

Before Vatican II met, some theologians spoke of the consultation of the worldwide episcopate that preceded the definitions of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption as examples of an "ecumenical council by correspondence." Yves Congar vigorously rejected the notion on the grounds that the open conversations and the common effort to reach consensus that can take place when bishops meet face-to-face is impossible when everything is carried out by private correspondence. He had a point, surely, and Vatican II represents an example of how a real council, carried out openly and with complete freedom in communion, will be gratefully received by the church. The dialectic of teaching and reception is an event within the prior reality of ecclesial communion, and this places responsibilities upon both those who teach and those who receive. Simply for the sake of communication, other ways of exercising the teaching office have to be found. As Newman said, in urging understanding for those who had difficulties with Vatican I's definition of papal infallibility, believing is not the same thing as obeying. Teaching, one might add, is not the same thing as legislating. □



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Margaret O'Gara

Margaret O'Gara is a Roman Catholic and teaches theology at the Faculty of Theology in the University of Saint Michael's College, Toronto. She is a member of several ecumenical dialogue commissions and published Triumph in Defeat: Infallibility, Vatican I, and the French Minority Bishops *(Catholic University of America Press, 1988).*

While widespread newspaper coverage in November on infallibility and women's ordination showed my students the relevance of theology, I would have preferred another means to achieve this pedagogical goal.

On May 30, 1994, Pope John Paul II declared that the church has no authority to ordain women to the priesthood, and that this judgment is to be held definitively by the faithful. Then on November 18, 1995, the Congregation for the

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Doctrine of the Faith publicized its judgment that the teaching about women's exclusion from priestly ordination pertains to the deposit of the faith and that it has been taught infallibly by the ordinary and universal magisterium.

The surprising and problematic thing here is the congregation's judgment that the ordinary and universal magisterium has taught infallibly about women's ordination. It is hard to find a basis for this judgment.

Vatican II says that the college of bishops can teach infallibly not only through ecumenical councils but also sometimes in their ordinary teaching on faith and morals when they all hold the same position. But in fact it is hard to argue that the whole episcopate has actually expressed any common judgment about women's ordination in the form this question has taken in modern times, Francis Sullivan, S.J., notes. "One could think of a number of issues, such as the morality of owning slaves or torturing people suspected of heresy," he writes, "where a position that was taken for granted as true through most of the church's history was reversed when the question had finally been raised in a new way" (*The Tablet*, June 18, 1994).

Sullivan notes three possible criteria for establishing that a doctrine is taught by the ordinary and universal magisterium: common adherence of all the faithful, or universal and constant consensus of Catholic theologians, or consultation with all the bishops. But the congregation, he notes, "has not invoked any of these criteria" (*America*, December 9, 1995). Nor, I would add, is it clear that they could be invoked. Ordinary Roman Catholics are obviously divided among themselves over this issue. So too are Roman Catholic theologians. When visiting four theological centers during two weeks in December for conferences on various topics, I could not find a single theologian who agreed with the congregation's judgment. And bishops themselves are no longer of one mind on this question. In recent years, several bishops have publicly questioned either the arguments or the irreversibility of the teaching against women's ordination.

Besides the issue of discerning consensus, there is the issue of the nature of infallibility itself. Roman Catholics have used the word "infallibility" to describe the assistance God gives the church in believing and teaching on matters of faith and morals, matters such as the Incarnation or the Trinity. Infallibility's purpose is suggested by an official clarification to *Lumen gentium* (12) made at Vatican II; there infallibility is described as the Holy Spirit's assistance by which "the church...cannot completely fall away from the way of salvation." Is this question—whom the church may admit to priestly ordination—the kind of matter on which pope, or council, or anyone at all, could in fact speak infallibly? It's hard to see how.

For ecumenical dialogue, the congregation's statement may be very damaging. Many Orthodox, Episcopalians, and Protestants in ecumenical dialogue increasingly recognize the value to the whole church of a ministry of unity by the bishop of Rome, but they emphasize that his ministry should be exercised more collegially, as Vatican II envisioned. The congregation's recent teaching about infallibility, made more confusing by the routine papal approval to publish it, illustrates the kind of papal exercise of authority most feared by ecumenical-dialogue-partner churches. It may convince some that infallibility is simply too dangerous an idea to use: too easily open to abuse, too confusing.

This reminds me of a warning by Félix Dupanloup of Orléans, a French bishop at Vatican I who opposed the proposal to teach papal infallibility. He cautioned, "Doubtless...theologians will be able to distinguish the nuances and the fine points and to show that this is not exactly a definition, but how will the multitude of those who are not theologians discern that the pope who is fallible even as pope in such and such an act is no longer fallible in this or that other act?"

I hope that some ecumenical partners will be as generous as one colleague, an Anglican bishop deeply committed to the unity of the church. The congregation's action, he said sadly, is a clumsy exercise of authority. By causing confusion and skepticism, he continued, it weakens all exercises of authority, even those which are good. So it is a loss for all Christians.

In his gentle but realistic reproof, Roman Catholics may find some direction for seeking deeper understanding of infallibility's meaning. □

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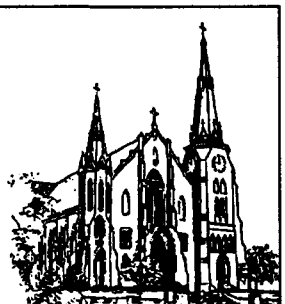

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Francis X. Murphy

Francis X. Murphy, C.SS.R., is the author of numerous books, including The Papacy Today *(Macmillan) and* John Paul II's Extraordinary Synod *(Michael Glazier).*

In the common room of the Redemptorist headquarters in Rome, a large marble plaque commemorates the use of the *aula* by the archbishop of Westminster, Henry Edward Manning (1808-92) and co-conspirators in 1870 in propelling Vatican I to define the infallibility of the pope.

Manning's determined effort was, in part, the result of his association with the Metaphysical Society, in which leaders of the British philosophical and scientific world met monthly to discuss world problems. The famous Darwinian agnostic, Thomas H. Huxley, had twitted the archbishop with the claim that in the physical sciences, experts achieved infallibility since they were able to repeat their experiments.

Manning's pique and reaction led him to the conviction that if infallibility was possible in the material world, then surely the church, as custodian of doctrinal and moral truth, had the prerogative of infallibility; and that it was encapsulated in the Roman pontiff as successor to Peter who had been admonished by Jesus Christ, "and you once strengthened confirm your brothers" (Lk. 22:23).

Based on an ecclesiology that considered the church as a unique *societas perfecta* in a politico-hierarchical sense, Vatican I declared both the primacy of the pope and the infallibility of the church in defining matters of faith and morals. It said that the Roman pontiff is endowed with the charism of infallibility in proclaiming Christian truth on his own (*ex sese*), not requiring the assent of the church. Sixty-two prelates who felt that this teaching, while true, was untimely, boycotted the solemn declaration. With the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Pope Pius IX was forced to conclude the council without a discussion of the place of the bishops in the hierarchical structure of the church, thus giving the Vatican bureaucracy a strictly political structure, with the supreme pontiff as the foundation and unique ruler as the Vicar of Christ.

During the next hundred years, the doctrine was the subject of incessant controversy. By defining the church as the "People of God," Vatican II, without denying the papal prerogative of infallibility, changed the ecclesiology of the papacy by insisting on the collegiality of the bishops with and under the pope in ruling the church and in defining its teachings. Now, as a result of a papal decision that women cannot be ordained priests, the manner in which this papal charism is to be interpreted is once again under somewhat agitated discussion.

John Paul says flatly Christ did not choose women among the twelve he selected for priestly ordination; therefore the church does not enjoy the faculty of so doing. The pope eschews explanations of the choice based on cultural, social, or other circumstances, and indicates that it is the will of God. This does not discriminate against women since the priesthood is a service and not a structural domination.

While this decision presents a definite obstacle to ecumenical relations with the churches of the Reformation, it is consistent with the pope's attitude to the Orthodox communions that he sees as in possession of the same faith and practice as his Roman church.

Meanwhile, John Paul has been making strenuous efforts not merely to assert the equality of men and women within the church, but has gone out of his way to point out the tremendous progress in the employment of women in almost all of the church's functions. In an address at Castle Gandolfo in early September, the pope asserted that the commitment of the church to women was rooted in Christ himself who, although not calling women to be apostles, assigned them primary roles as proclaimers of his Resurrection.

Citing the 1987 Synod on the Laity that enjoined women to "participate in the life of the church without any discrimination whatever," he listed actual possibilities which were now open to women: teaching theology; ministry in the liturgy in ways permitted, including service at the altar; participation in pastoral and administrative councils, as well as in diocesan synods; working in the church's curias and tribunals; being pastorally active in a variety of ways, including new forms of care of parishes where priests were lacking, except, of course, where "properly priestly tasks" were concerned.

In his 1995 Maundy Thursday letter to priests, the pope revealed a semi-mystical basis for his Mariological concepts. He reflects that in the Sacrifice instituted in the Upper Room, "there was hidden the ineffable love of his mother." Her presence at the institution of the Eucharist can be sensed, he asserts. For the body which is offered at the Last Supper is that which, as the Son of God, "he had taken from his mother"; and the blood "is the blood which gave life to the body received from his Virgin Mother." He concludes, Mary gave her life to the Son of God so that he might offer himself. The pope insists that the universal priesthood of the faithful and its royal dignity belong to both men and women.

With this semi-mystical consideration in the background, John Paul has no hesitation in maintaining that the lack of ordination of women to the priesthood is not a discrimination; it is a service within the divine plan.

Vatican scuttlebut seems to think that it was not Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who inspired the use of the term "infallible" in this instance, and gives him credit for preventing its use in two previous encyclicals, *Veritatis splendor* and *Evangelium vitae*. This time, however, the pope's determination proved irrepressible. Vaticanologists are suggesting that with this papal "no" further agitation on the part of feminists or experts is futile. Theologians and polemicists would be well advised to await the arrival of a pontiff as strong-willed and as theologically competent as Wojtyla to discover whether "what a pope can do a pope can undo." □

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Richard Alleva

TWO OF A KIND

Stone & Nixon

Nixon may not be the last word on the thirty-seventh president, but it *is* the ultimate Oliver Stone movie. The nature of the filmmaker is here, undistilled: the paranoia, the pretentiousness, the simple-minded views of recent American history and institutions, the spasmodic flashes of real talent, the shrewdness in selecting and directing actors, and—above all—the unbounded confidence of the man as he tries to explain all the historical convulsions of the last three decades by evoking the Fu Manchu nefariousness of a few organizations, as if Sax Rohmer or Ian Fleming had undertaken the task of an Arnold Toynbee.

Paranoia is both Stone's fuel and the gift he seeks to bestow on the public. His Nixon may be a mover and shaker but he is, first and last, a victim. A victim first of his own past—family background, era, economic origin, etc.—but also a victim of...Them. And who are Them? The usual suspects: the C.I.A., evil Texas billionaires, the F.B.I., the mafia, anti-Castro Cubans. Stone just barely distinguishes among them and seems to feel that they work, if not together, on the same projects and toward the same goals.

Nevertheless, it is the C.I.A. that bears the brunt of *Nixon*'s slurred but all-encompassing *J'accuse*. Early in the film, H.R. Haldeman, reporting to his boss about the burglars who have broken into the Watergate complex, mentions that E. Howard Hunt leads them. Nixon blanches. "You know Hunt, sir?" asks John Dean. Oh boy, does he ever! Not with Nixon's consent but with his unresisting knowledge, the C.I.A., to put and keep a Republican in the White House, seems to have effected every violent change in American politics throughout the sixties and seventies: the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers and King, the shooting of George Wallace. I write "seems" because Stone never really pins down just what the C.I.A did or whom it worked with or just how much was connived at by other organizations working with or against the C.I.A. Since he obviously doesn't have any hard evidence against anyone, Stone operates through cinematic innuendo. Let J. Edgar Hoover raise a sinister eyebrow and we cut to some headline announcing an assassination. Evil Texas millionaires exchange conspiratorial looks as the Kennedy presidential plane lands in Dallas. A news clip of Teddy Kennedy walking out of the Chappaquiddick inquest is nestled within a volley of shots of E. Howard Hunt or some other agent slinking off into the night fog.

I must confess that I'm writing phrases such as "some headline" and "Hunt or some other agent" because, after only one viewing, I'm not sure I'm pairing innuendoes with political events correctly. How could I be? Stone's editing methods don't strive for clarity but for saturation bombing of the viewer's mind. Besides, Stone isn't really trying to advance a factually supported case. His incriminating montages are the cinematic equivalents of Joe McCarthy's tactics, and this may be why Stone is generally despised by serious political journalists, especially the liberal ones. But if his films achieve little that is practical in the narrow sense of the word, they may very well color the thinking of people, especially young people, who haven't read or thought deeply about politics. They create a kind of reflexive suspicion about government in the spectator that is as unhealthy as reflexive trust.

But there is more to this movie than all the above, and it is this something more that makes it one of Stone's better efforts. The film isn't just a promoter of paranoia in the viewer but also a portrayal of paranoia in its protagonist. On this level, it's a pretty good show. There really is a Nixon in *Nixon*.

The collaboration (I almost wrote "conspiracy") between Stone and Anthony Hopkins is a unique one. Using flashbacks to Nixon's past and quick excursions into his dreams, the writer-director seems to be creating a cinematic essay explaining why Nixon's body looks and

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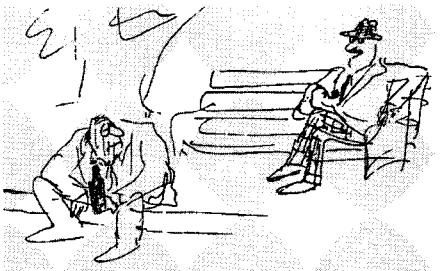
moves the way it does: a half-unstrung marionette prowling to kill the puppet-master, or Ed Sullivan on a bad mescaline trip. It's almost as if the actor were a text which Stone was annotating.

Reviewing *The Remains of the Day* (*Commonweal*, December 17, 1993), I noted that Hopkins's "specialty is fierce emotion unsuccessfully suppressed." Here, the unsuccessful suppression becomes barely concealed frenzy. Watching the real Richard Nixon on TV twenty-one years ago, I gasped as I saw the president of the United States storm out of a press room, stop in his tracks and turn, grab Ron Ziegler, and hurl the hapless press secretary back at the reporters who had been snapping at Nixon's heels. That moment is in the movie, and though it can't possibly be as shocking as the actual event, it is a key moment in the Stone-Hopkins portrait. This is a Nixon who has a demon sewn under his skin and quite often the demon takes over and lashes out. The trollish frenzy of the famous victory gesture, the nervous clearing of the throat as he mentally gropes



"You're a victim of life. I'm an observer of life."

for something to say, the instantly manufactured smile flashed at his audiences like a malediction ("You want charm from *me*? Take that, damn you!"), these we may remember of the real Nixon, but Hopkins hasn't merely mimicked, he's poetically aggravated his subject's pathos, desperation, and nastiness to achieve a Goyaesque luridity. Hopkins's performance is unforgettable.

And what frame does Stone build to contain this force? A Freudian one. Mary Steenburgen's skillful rendering of Nixon's Quaker mother as an animate but untouchable icon ("My mother was a saint," Nixon said at his staff farewell) is perhaps the key to this movie. In her perfect rectitude, she cannot be satisfied by any material accomplishment by her son. To blame himself for this eternal failure in her eyes would be too much to bear, so the external causes for failure are created: the Kennedys, the media, the Eastern establishment. But, in an Oliver Stone movie, all paranoiacs have real enemies, and Nixon's—according to Stone—are all those secret agents and sinister billionaires.

And sex. Ah, yes. Sex, too, is an enemy since it diverts a man from the work of constant warfare that is Nixonian politics. And so Pat Nixon (brilliantly played by Joan Allen) is made over by Stone into an oddly sexual figure whose warm, sensual love must be avoided by her husband so that he can concentrate on what a Real Man must do: Destroy his enemies and rule the world. The ascension to the throne is also a Flight from Woman. Within the carapace that he has turned his body into, Hopkins-Nixon shelters and suffers.

Much of Stone's film technique has degenerated into a collection of mannerisms: the sudden shifting to black-and-white, for instance, only makes sense in the childhood flashbacks. The staging of the meetings with Brezhnev and Mao hover uncertainly between satire and genuflection. And Nixon's near-death encounter with otherworldly beings is a ghastly dive into the world of supermarket tabloids. Generally, though, the restlessness of the film's style matches Nixon's psychological turmoil, just as the paranoia of Stone's worldview finds its proper avatar in the paranoid Nixon. In the closing scenes, when the director puts away his bag of tricks and simply bears down on the lonely figure of the president as he walks the darkened hallways of a fear-encased White House, something grindingly powerful is at last achieved.

In his faults, in his strengths, Richard Nixon was an archetypal American. In his faults, in his strengths, Oliver Stone is an archetypal American artist of the postmodern era. The pairing of this filmmaker with this protagonist is a marriage made and annealed in Hell. □

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Michael O. Garvey

I have never liked the expression "deposit of faith" because a "deposit" sounds disconcertingly like something you'd put or find in a bank or in worse places. "Deposit" just doesn't capture the living sense of what Jesus has told and continues to tell us in Scripture and tradition. Earth-shackled sinners though we may all be, I can't believe that our Lord would entrust us with a mere deposit, let alone bid us rely on one.

"Deposit" sounds too fixed, too predictable, too finite and too...well, boring, for a thing to revere, to pass on to one's children, and to stake one's life on. Saint Irenaeus, not exactly our most ravingly liberal theologian, said that the *depositum fidei* is something which is continually stirred by the Holy Spirit and so "as if in an excellent vessel, is constantly being renewed and causes the very vessel that contains it to be renewed." Amen, and deposit is a clunky sort of word for such a wonder. If only we'd had better editors in the first couple of centuries.

Father John Hardon, who probably has no objection to the phrase "deposit of faith," has used the somewhat more euphonious term, "treasury," for his anthology of great Catholic writing. It's not "a" treasury, but "the" treasury of Catholic wisdom, and the definite article leads me to suspect that in his heart of hearts he wants it to become a deposit some day. In the introduction, the claim is made that here is "a comprehensive anthology of the outstanding Catholic literature from the first century to modern times." That's an ambitious claim for just over 700 pages, an impossible claim, in fact, but God bless the man for trying: The result is a book well worth having, guaranteed to delight anyone who loves the church and likes to read.

You can't (and I certainly won't) quibble about what's included or excluded from a deposit of faith, but a fair part of the pleasure of an anthology or a treasury is quibbling, so here goes. As he presents the "mystics and martyrs, philosophers and theologians, poets and prose writers" who are "truly representative of the spirit and substance of Catholicism in its paradox of phenomenal stability and versatility over the centuries," Hardon does a nearly unassailable job from the *Didache* all the way through Gerard Manley Hopkins, although the blue-chip theologians and philosophers are more generously represented, it seems to me, than the great mystics. It's good that Saint Thomas More is here, and it's sad that Dame Julian of Norwich is not. Brother Lawrence's *Practice of the Presence of God* gets no ink at all, and letting go a few pages of Saint Louis de Montfort's *True Devotion* would surely have been worth making room for a reflection or two.

But it's particularly in the last hundred pages (and somewhere early in the twentieth century) that Hardon's *Treasury* begins to lose its luster. Hilaire Belloc was a wonderful writer when he could keep his anti-Semitism in check or wasn't propagandizing for British imperialist murderers during the Great War, but a chapter from his *Europe and*

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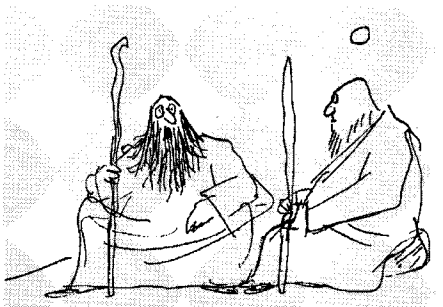
the Faith can't shine very brightly in the same 700 pages with Patrick, Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, Dante, and Newman. In a similar vein, Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven," while not all that great a poem, is a marvelous evocation of ferocious grace and God's terrible love of man, but to include even one more line of his poetry—and there are two other entire Thompson poems in the *Treasury*—invites readers to wonder why Joyce Kilmer's dorkiest stuff isn't represented. And there's nothing by David Jones at all

The last entry in the *Treasury* belongs not to Jacques Maritain, who would have been a nice fit, nor to Ronald Knox, whose book *Enthusiasm* might have been mined usefully, but to the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, whose 100th birthday fell last year and provided the occasion for a commemorative collection of essays selected by Patricia A. Kossmann, his literary executor. I was born into a rare North American family whose television set disappeared during my childhood—it vanished (some siblings have suggested, and my parents have never denied, that it was sabotaged) at some point between the McCarthy hearings and the assassination of President John Kennedy. It didn't reappear in the living room until well into the color and cable era. So I was unable to be among the 30 million or so regular viewers of Archbishop Fulton Sheen's programs. Dear old Dr. Furrie, our family physician and my Confirmation sponsor, was, however, and I vividly remember hearing him rhapsodize one Saturday afternoon about the "Life Is Worth Living" show as he aspirated my injured knee, trying out an excruciating variety of needles neatly arranged on a stainless steel tray beside us. "You should watch him some time on a rerun," he said as my draining and superfluous blood began to fill the Dixie cup he'd made me hold below my own swollen kneecap. (Saturday was the nurse's day off at Dr. Furrie's office.) "It's just amazing how the guy lays everything out for you," he continued, smiling as I began to go woozy.



"I'm so full of wisdom, I frighten myself."

That unpleasant association notwithstanding, Fulton Sheen does, in fact, lay everything out for you, as befits a pioneering televangelist preoccupied by the consonance of apostolic faith and human rationality. This is the confident world view of the *Baltimore Catechism*, of *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*, of *The Catholic's Ready Answer*, the baton Mother Angelica has recently picked up, and whether it's the Tridentine tidiness of the theology, or simply my own intellectual slovenliness, I can't quite make myself at home here. There are always three reasons or stages or conditions for everything. There is never a question hanging, never an innuendo, and always a definitive closure. In these essays on the confusion and inclusion of ordinary human life, work, fear, prayer, marriage, suffering, boredom, and pleasure, it's almost as if mystery is not only rationally penetrable, but exhaustible as well. Which doesn't seem right somehow. What is pleasant to notice, though (and impossible to imagine happening on prime-time television today), is the congenial ease with which Mother Angelica's predecessor infuses his essays with insights which could have been gathered today from Hardon's anthology, along with samplings from Beethoven, Napoleon, Jung, Dostoevsky, Darwin, H.G. Wells, Tolstoy, William James, and Milton. There may be all sorts of graduate students as well-read these days, but there are few, if any, evangelists. That is a sad thing for a community whose baptism makes amateur anthologists of us all. □

Michael O. Garvey *is the author of* Finding Fault *(Thomas More Press).*

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FROM SAINTS TO NUTS

Handbook of Catholic Theology
Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, editors
Crossroad, $75, 783 pp.

The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism
Editor, Richard P. McBrien
HarperSanFrancisco, $45, 1,345 pp.

Joseph A. Komonchak

The *Handbook of Catholic Theology* offers over 300 articles, illustrated by about sixty charts and tables, on the most important themes in Catholic systematic theology, written by major contemporary theologians in Germany and North America. In the articles translated from the original German edition, a theme is typically developed by exploring the biblical background, the history of theological reflection, official church teaching, ecumenical perspectives, and systematic reflections. The treatments often are very brief (the history of theology on "God" has fewer than nine lines) but usually communicate the essential information, or at least as much as a typical German theologian thinks is relevant. Unfortunately, this often means that only developments in German cultural or theological history are taken into account: if it wasn't thought or written in German, it can't be very important. (I heard recently this quip: an American theologian, asked what he thought of an earlier theological dictionary, *Sacramentum Mundi*, replied, "It really should be entitled *Sacramentum Germaniae*.") This is particularly evident in the treatments of ecumenical dimensions, where the dialogue with Lutheranism overshadows all others, as when it is claimed that it is Reformation communities that most insistently call for a renewal of pneumatology and no mention is made of Orthodoxy, which is also absent from the articles on bishops, church, and collegiality.

Perhaps in order to compensate for the German focus, the English edition includes several essays written by American theologians. These are presented under the rubric of "Contemporary Issues," perhaps a misnomer since the original German essays often discuss such issues; given the content of most of the added articles, they might more properly be called: "North American Perspectives." Anyone who wants to get an idea of what passes for theology in Germany and the United States today could usefully compare the back-to-back essays. The bibliographies supplied for each article refer almost exclusively to works written in or translated into English, a pity. The readership of this text will be largely drawn from graduate students and it might help to remind them how much they will be missing if they can't read foreign languages.

The translations are generally well done, except for the irritating use of "he or she", "his or her" formulae and by the refusal to use a personal pronoun of God, which often makes the prose sound like a "Dick and Jane" primer. We don't quite have, "Out of God's mercy and for God's glory God stretched forth God's arm to smite God's enemies and to save God's people and reconcile them to God's self," but it's not far away.

The *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* has a much broader aim: while it includes a good number of articles on theological topics, it also provides a host of articles (more than 4,200) on practically everything you wanted to know about the concrete living reality that is Catholicism, including some things you probably didn't even know you could ask about. There are articles on people, places, events, institutions, religious orders,

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sacraments, practices, art, vestments, etc. Both past and present, the enduring and the evanescent, the central and the peripheral are represented. The focus is on Western Catholicism, but an effort is made to include the Eastern-rite churches, and there are articles also on the most prominent Protestant Reformers and traditions, on the Orthodox churches, and on some ancient and modern philosophers. The entries range in size from a few lines to several pages. Cross-references are abundant, but bibliographies are supplied inconsistently. There are many photographs and charts. The handsomely produced volume of 1,345 pages is well worth the surprisingly cheap price.

The entries are generally accurate and supply essential information, although sometimes so briefly that, for example in some of the articles on saints, one is left wondering why the person was canonized or chosen for inclusion here. Inevitably, of course, the articles vary in quality, but the cross-references often allow the weaknesses of one treatment to be compensated for by others.

The editors have made an effort to be up-to-date. There are articles on the "Big Bang," reproductive technologies, centering prayer, the seamless garment, the preferental option for the poor, inclusive language and sexism (but not on political correctness), and, in successive entries, both Women for Faith and Family and the Women's Ordination Conference.

The volume was conceived and edited at the University of Notre Dame, with which the general editor and all of his associate editors have or had some connection. The Golden Dome appears in a cover-photograph; its president emeritus wrote a foreword and appears in two photographs and a laudatory entry; he is, says one of the photo captions, "one of the most influential Catholic leaders in U.S. history." In parallel, the entry for the University of Notre Dame begins: "the most famous Catholic university in the world," which makes it curious that there is no entry for Knute Rockne or Johnny Lujack. The university's Laetare Medal receives an entry, and its award to him crowns the article on John Tracy Ellis. (Besides Notre Dame, the only other American Catholic institutions of higher education noticed are Catholic University and Georgetown.)

No one will complain that any person, place, thing, or event has been included here, but some will wonder "If X, then why not Y?" If Alphege of Canterbury is here, where, his descendants and others will ask, is Arnulf of Metz? If Francis Thompson, why not Joyce Kilmer or John Bannister Tabb? If Hubert Jedin, why not Johannes Quasten? If Islam and Zoroastrianism, why not Buddhism, Hinduism or Taoism? If Methodism, why not Baptists? John Courtney Murray is here but not two of his chief opponents, Francis Connell and Joseph Clifford Fenton. Caryll Houselander and Paul Horgan don't make it. Among the protagonists of Vatican II, Cardinals Alfrink, Suenens, Dearden, and Ottaviani are in, but not König, Döpfner, Ritter, and Shehan. Speaking of cardinals, where is Suhard? Among American biblical scholars, John L. McKenzie is in, but not Bruce

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Vawter and Patrick Skehan. Joseph Fichter is honored, but not Paul Hanly Furfey. Bishops John Hughes and Bernard McQuaid are here but not the two Kenricks or Archbishop Rommel. The YMCA and the YWCA have brief entries but not the CYO or the YCS and YCW. Catholicism in Poland and Hungary is treated, but not in the Czech or Slovak Republics. Argentina might feel slighted at getting only eight lines, but Brazil gets none.

Things get even dicier when one notices that the editors have chosen to include living people. Cardinal O'Connor is here, but not Cardinals Law, Krol, or the other living American cardinals. J. Bryan Hehir is here, but not George Higgins or Michael Novak. Governor Cuomo is admitted (his speech on religion and politics—guess where it was delivered—is said to be "considered by some the most important and influential address on the subject ever given by a U.S. Catholic layperson"), but not Governor Casey or Geraldine Ferraro. Richard McCormick and Charles Curran make the cut, but not Germain Grisez. *Commonweal* makes it (whew!), along with *America*, *The Catholic World* and *Theological Studies*, but not *The Sign*, *The Thomist*, and *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review*. Nineteenth-century traditionalism is here, but not our twentieth-century variety. William F. Buckley is here but not Garry Wills, Rosemary Radford Ruether but not Mary Daly. Opus Dei is here, but not Communione e Liberazione or the Legionnaires of Christ.

These are the sorts of things, serious and not so serious, that a reviewer can notice in reviewing works of such great ambition. Having edited a volume which has certain parallels with those under review here, I can sympathize with the difficulties, from conception to parturition, involved in the task. Both volumes generally succeed in what they have attempted and will be usefully added to Catholic libraries, both institutional and personal. □

Joseph A. Komonchak, *a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, teaches in the Department of Religion and Religious Education at The Catholic University of America.*

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Christology
A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus
Gerald O'Collins, S.J.
Oxford University Press, $14.95, 333 pp.

Robert P. Imbelli

At the center of the gospel narrative stands the perennial Christological question: "Who do you say I am?" In response, the canonical New Testament bears witness to a variety of confessions of the mystery of Jesus. "You are the Messiah...the Son of God...the Image of the invisible God...the Word made flesh...Lord and God." By contrast, the "canon," as a "ruler" or "measuring rod," rules out other responses as inadequate to the mystery. Clearly, "one of the prophets" does not measure up to the uniqueness of Jesus or the good news of Christian faith.

Whoever follows the current academic reports on the identity of Jesus knows that not since the second century has there been such a farrago of differing portraits and presentations: Jesus the cynic philosopher; Jesus the social reformer; Jesus the therapist; Jesus the protofeminist. Though some of these views capture recognizable traits of Jesus, many of them are decidedly reductive: the latest chapter in the age-old gnostic saga that divorces the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith." The Christian disciple, schooled in the church's Scriptures and liturgy, finds in many contemporary studies

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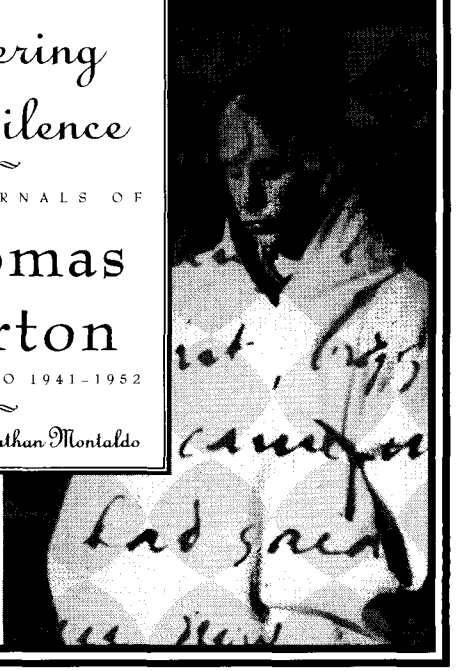

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neither illumination for the mind nor nourishment for the spirit. Thankfully, Gerald O'Collins's new book offers both.

O'Collins, an Australian Jesuit, longtime professor in Rome's Gregorian University, has already written widely on Christological themes. The present book represents the distillation of years of study, reflection, and writing. It is a work of informed scholarship, careful critique, and mature theological insight. It shows how deep fidelity to the tradition can stimulate, not constrict, creativity. If Jesus is who the church's tradition confesses him to be, then his mystery is inexhaustibly fecund and patient of ever-deepening, prayerful appropriation.

No appropriation is without its governing perspective. For O'Collins, the "primary interpretative key" of his systematic Christology is "the Resurrection of the crucified Jesus and his presence." This option surely reflects the optic of the New Testament itself, which views the life and ministry of Jesus in the light of the Resurrection and the Lord's continuing presence in his community. Moreover, it renders O'Collins's study particularly relevant for the church's liturgical life — a relevance further enhanced by his path-breaking exploration of the theme of "presence" as a systematic category.

From this perspective he weaves an account of the life and ministry of the historical Jesus that is instructed by the exegetes, but also critically alert to presuppositions that color allegedly neutral findings. The outcome is a portrait in which the unmistakable originality of Jesus emerges in bold relief. Rather than attribute much of the newness of Christianity to nameless prophets in the early communities, O'Collins traces its source to Jesus himself. He contends, persuasively, that "Jesus' innovative reinterpretation of 'kingdom', 'Father' (and by implication 'Son of God'), and 'Son of man' sums up much of the thrust of his message."

Important as is the quest for the historical Jesus, the disciplined effort to discern Jesus' own intention and self-understanding, it is clearly not sufficient for Christian faith. The Resurrection of the Crucified represents a true breakthrough to a new realm of existence. Here the identity of Jesus is fully revealed in the transformation of his humanity effected by God's Spirit. O'Collins, who has published several studies of the Resurrection, cogently supports his insistence that the Resurrection "concerns Jesus' own living and glorious destiny after death" and cannot be reduced to a subjective disposition of the apostles, whether their experience of forgiveness or their conviction that Jesus' cause continues.

Moreover, the development of the church's Christological faith through the early councils hardly represents a "hellenization" of the "simple gospel" (as theological "liberals" from Harnack to the present lament), but the Spirit-

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guided discernment of the truth of the narrative proclaimed in the Scriptures. Indeed, for all the difficulty for us of the language and conceptuality employed by Nicaea and Chalcedon, the conciliar confessions passionately affirm the new understanding of the divine and the human revealed in Jesus Christ. The exposition of the teachings of the great councils (all the more needed in view of what O'Collins terms contemporary "neo-Arian" positions that, in effect, reduce Jesus to "superstar" status), serves as norm for the properly systematic treatment that forms the final third of the book.

Here O'Collins outlines a Christology that honors Chalcedon's affirmation of the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ in unique personal (hypostatic) union. However, O'Collins sketches an explicitly relational understanding of "person" that, while owing much to the theological tradition, draws further its implications. Thus he emphasizes the filial relationship of Jesus to the One he calls, "Abba, Father." In so doing, O'Collins argues cogently the legitimacy of speaking of the "faith" of Jesus. Since "faith" is not yet "sight," O'Collins questions the position of those like Aquinas who hold that the earthly Jesus already enjoyed the "beatific vision": the full vision of God in his essence. For O'Collins such a view risks compromising Chalcedon's confession of the genuine humanity of Jesus.

Perceptive reflections upon "love" as the heart of Christ's redemptive work and upon "presence" as a possible integrating concept structure O'Collins's Christological synthesis. In both cases I appreciated the freshness of his approach. Yet I found the treatment somewhat too "harmonious," striking notes evocative of Easter's "the strife is o'er." I missed the dissonant and agonistic undertones that could provide needed counterpoint. O'Collins's sensitive analyses would gain from more explicit consideration of the "pathological" elements of human experience: the willful refusal of love; the demonic denial of presence. The call to discipleship will then resonate still more clearly as the following of the *crucified* Christ in the work of redemption — realistically aware of its cost, yet sustained in the Spirit by the hope of sharing Christ's Resurrection.

Hans Urs von Balthasar once wrote: "A truth that is merely handed on, without being thought anew from its very foundations, has lost its vital power." Gerald O'Collins has thought Christological truth anew, thereby displaying its vital power. □

Robert P. Imbelli, *a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, teaches systematic theology at Boston College.*

JEREMIAH REDIVIVUS

Why Should Jews Survive?
Looking Past the Holocaust toward a Jewish Future
Michael Goldberg
Oxford University Press, $23, 191 pp.

Jack Schwartz

Jeremiads have an honored place at the table of Jewish literature and Rabbi Michael Goldberg's *Why Should Jews Survive* has all the attributes of the genre: it is passionate, didactic, iconoclastic. It diagnoses a malaise in the communal body and, with the guidance of Scripture, prescribes a cure. Like all such polemics it stages a cast of false idols, errant shepherds, and a wayward flock. Goldberg argues that modern American Jewry has replaced observance of the Mosaic Law with the Passion of the Holocaust—literally replacing the Tree of Life with the culture of death. He suggests that pilgrimage to such secular shrines as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, Yad Vashem in Israel, and observance of Yom Hashoah (Remembrance Day) is little better than the ancient Hebrews flirting with the gods of Baal on the hilltop altars of Canaan. God has been banished from the exercise.

Goldberg paints the post-Holocaust Jewish world as a society which, for the

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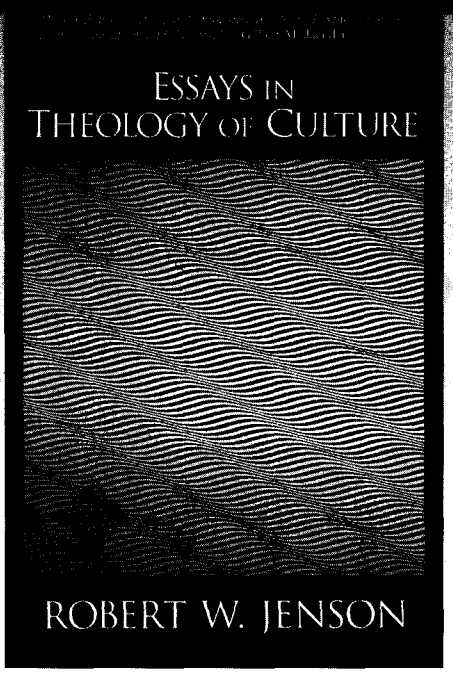
most part, has survived to no purpose—certainly not to do the bidding of God, which is its only valid enterprise. The result is a pale of atomized individuals who console themselves with fund-raising and lavish bar mitzvahs rather than a true community of faith dedicated to the observance of God's commandments. Goldberg asserts that the hollowness of "consumer Judaism" has led to the well-documented defections of large numbers of young Jews, and he calls for a regeneration of purpose along the lines of his own covenantal Judaism—renewing the observances prescribed in the covenant at Sinai. Few in the Jewish mainstream would take issue with much of this.

The author, however, insists on marshaling arguments to justify his position, and it is here that he drifts into turbulent, and murky, waters. He has a penchant for creating polarities and arbitrarily consigning people to the inner light of one or the outer darkness of the other. He offers two "master stories" by which people define themselves: the Exodus, which deals with ethics and ideals, and the Holocaust, which deals with mere existence. He portrays the post-Holocaust generation as having no purpose other than simple survival. That American Jewry in its variety, versatility, and complexity is simply "surviving" with little or no spiritual engagement is an assertion upon which the author brings virtually no evidence to bear except his personal convictions and anecdotal information, neither of which can bear the weight of his pronouncements.

In a similar vein, Goldberg lauds the Exodus master story at the expense of Purim. Now to compare the Exodus events—the central organizing drama of Judaism—with anything else in the Scriptures is, from a Jewish point of view, loading the dice. That each particular theme in Scripture has its special purpose, place, and time is brushed aside by the author who notes of Purim that "it is told each year (*ad nauseam*)." The problem with Purim—in which the Jews of ancient Persia are saved from destruction at the hands of Haman by the efforts of Mordecai and his ward, Esther—is that God, in Goldberg's view, "is notably absent from the story." As opposed to the Exodus master story, where the Jews were saved by "the mighty hand of God," here they saved themselves. Succor that "runs along a Purim/Holocaust axis" is mere rescue, whereas the salvation from Pharaoh in Exodus is about redemption. But not to worry. Goldberg informs us that "the paradigmatic telling of the Purim story enjoins Jews not to take the story seriously...Jewish tradition requires them instead to take it as a joke." Maimonides, in his introduction to Mishneh Torah, seems to hold differently, observing that we are commanded by God through his prophets to hear the Scroll of Esther to "recount the salvation that he wrought for us, and that he was ever near when we cried to him."

In essence, Goldberg laments that the establishment of the Holocaust as a rival "faith" is responsible for the diminution of interest in the Exodus tale and its precepts. He inveighs against an array of post-Holocaust thinkers, charging Harold Kushner (*When Bad Things Happen to*



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Good People) with the sin of randomness, Emil Fackenheim (*God's Presence in History*) with the sin of spite, and Richard Rubenstein (*After Auschwitz*) with the sin of nihilism. He dismisses all these attempts to struggle with the meaning of the Holocaust as thin gruel for the needy spirit. Whatever the virtue of his critique, Goldberg has put the cart before the horse.

The death of God is, of course, not a Jewish idea, but a universal one which has engaged theologians of all faiths since Nietzsche, Darwin, and Marx. The Jew as alienated from his culture is not a product of the Holocaust, but has plenty of gentile company in the existential philosophies that spanned the war. And that Jews in great numbers no longer fulfill their part of the covenant at Sinai is not the fault of the Holocaust but of modernity, which significantly predates the *shoah*. Secularism was infectious in the pre-Hitler Eastern Europe whose devoutness Goldberg extols. By the interwar period the Enlightenment had made great inroads in the East and the faiths of socialism, Zionism, and yes, capitalism, had captured the imagination of the young. It was modern Jewry thoroughly secularized that sought a secular response to the Holocaust.

Goldberg writes that while God didn't directly cause the Holocaust, he is at some level ultimately responsible for it. Got that? But it is not for us to question his ways. Goldberg rebukes Job for trying to understand the grounds for his suffering: "In presuming that he could be in a position to speak truly about God's motives, Job was in essence presuming to be God and not man." The question for Goldberg is not why the Jews bear with God but why God bears with the Jews. And here Goldberg confides God's motives in doing so: His concern for his good name—he made a wager on Israel as his own redeemer and his reputation would suffer if he welshed on the bet. From God's mouth into Goldberg's ear. And what is the proof of God's love and the seal of his promise? Why the fact that, despite the vicissitudes of history, the Jews are still here fulfilling the covenant, at least some of them? Goldberg writes that God has never let the oppressor destroy the Jewish People, a term he uses as a symbol of the nation incarnate that transcends the individuals who compose it. In that sense, the Jewish People has survived its tribulations, but in our own generation, 6 million of those individual people, plus as many gentile victims, went to their death in the most horrible way and God did not come to their aid. Make no mistake: The Nazis achieved their goal in Europe. To talk about God's beneficence in this context honors neither God nor the truth.

There is now a vast literature on God and the Holocaust and the best of these books approach the subject with great trepidation and humility. Goldberg's intrusive, abrasive, confrontational style on this most sensitive, rending subject, says more about his moral authority to discuss it than all the footnotes he throws at us. Those interested in an instructive discussion of the issue should read *Faith after the Holocaust* (KTAV), a valuable contribution by the theologian Eliezer Berkovits. Observing that one dare speak

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only with great hesitation and trembling on the subject, he writes that confronting Auschwitz one faces ultimate evil, but also the ultimate goodness, that if the evil was unnatural, the good was supernatural, if the humiliation was inhuman, the preservation of man's dignity was super-human. Berkovits does not arbitrarily contrast the Commandments and Auschwitz; he places them, and God, inside it. It is a mystery that of all of us, including Rabbi Goldberg, might dwell on. □

Jack Schwartz *was formerly book editor of* Newsday.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

Hebrew "language conventions," as if no other linguistic options occurred to these presumably sexist but perhaps simply conventional people. The Hebrews were well aware of the option to use feminine language for God, since their neighbors used that option freely. Scholars on both sides of the inclusive language divide concur that the biblical exclusion of feminine language for God (except in similes) is unique in the ancient Near East.

As for personal experience: I earned my M.A. at a seminary that, despite its many strengths, had what I now regard as a serious weakness. Incoming students entered an "inclusive language" community that eschewed all personal pronouns for God. But there was no dialogue or debate or discussion about the theological or anthropological soundness of this move; it was simply presented to us as manifestly just and loving and true, a move consistent with, even required by, our Christianity and by women's dignity.

I lived with this feminist consciousness for several years; I learned to shudder when I heard God referred to with all those he's, him's, and his'es. I learned to have problems relating to the biblical God. Gradually the Creator of heaven and earth, whom I had never known very well as Father, became more and more an unknown.

Without going into details about my life as a prodigal daughter, suffice it to say that through Jesus I eventually rediscovered God my Father; I also rediscovered the one whom Jesus called "Mother," the one whom he gave as "Mother" to the disciple he loved. They—not the impersonal God of the pronounless world, nor the Mother-Father of the inventive-inclusive world, but the Father and Mother who are mine in Jesus—have helped me recover my dignity, beauty, and greatness as a woman.

Much work remains to be done before we, as male and female Christians, come to understand more fully the theological and anthropological significance of the revelation of Jesus Christ: a man who—and here John Cort and the Jesus Seminar would agree—called God "Abba," "Father." By excluding voices like Cort's, we close our minds and impoverish our discourse. I fear also that when we exclude these voices as sexist and reactionary we are ultimately doing a grave injustice to the very people we are trying to include.

MEGAN MALONEY
Milwaukee, Wis.

Rome will wriggle

No doubt the latest from Rome is aggravating, but I find it a little early for a crisis of faith. Why not wait a century or two to see whether it becomes another *Syllabus of Errors* like Pio Nono's. Meantime, women would do well to campaign seriously for female cardinals. After a century or two of papal elections in which half the electors were women, the issue might be revisited. In the past, Rome has been able to wiggle out of untenable positions. Why not in this case?

(REV.) ANTHONY DI RUSSO
North Walpole, N.H.

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OKLAHOMA CITY: GROUND ZERO

Mark F. Bernstein

It is quiet again outside what is left of the federal building in Oklahoma City. The driver of one of the TV trucks is hunched down in his seat, taking a nap while a soap opera plays in the back. When a visitor asks one of the marshals at the courthouse across the street whether there is anything going on, he gestures toward the sound technicians smoking outside and confesses, "I don't know; ask those guys."

Months after the bombing, signs of damage are still apparent. Where the demolished federal building stood now looks like any construction site; a crane and a few bulldozers pick along the empty lot, surrounded by mounds of red Oklahoma clay. The only part of the property standing is a small park on the side of the building that was shielded from the blast. Even there, the wrought-iron lampposts were twisted at crazy angles from the force of the explosion.

Down the street, a billboard next to the First United Methodist Church, untouched since the bombing three days after Easter, reads:

CO E N
SEE HI GLORY
A RIL 5
7:30

At the corner of 5th & Robinson, Ground Zero, sunlight twinkles through tiny shrapnel holes in the street signs.

It is not possible to have a tragedy in this country any more without someone designing a colored ribbon for us all to wear. We started with yellow for the Iranian hostages, and some may remember the green ones worn in Atlanta several years ago for victims of a serial child killer. Pink is for breast cancer, and of course the most successful have been the red AIDS ribbons, *de rigueur* for the Academy Awards. Surely there have been others. The Oklahoma City bombing victims get a royal blue ribbon with yellow trim.

Ribbons are merely the demure cousins of bumper stickers, and Oklahoma City has those, too. The "Pride in the Heartland" logo bursts forth from cars, T-shirts, and billboards along Interstate 40, along with subtle variations like "Tragedy in the Heartland," "Helping the Heartland," or "Healing the Heartland."

An impressive collection of this stuff may be seen in the governor's reception room at the state capitol, where gifts sent from around the country have been put on display. As a symbol of the nation's psyche, the collection is remarkable. First, there are drawings sent by school children; some depict the ruined building or the mayhem of the rescue effort, others express simple sentiments of sadness and hope. The heartrending news photo of the fireman carrying a dying child from the rubble appears everywhere—in crayon drawings, on T-shirts, even on a needlepoint pillow.

Another memorial stands across from the federal building itself. Pinned to the chain-link fence surrounding the bombing site one finds wilted carnations and bouquets, a rosary, pieces of ribbon, a Brian McRae baseball card. There are yellowed notes left in the victims' memory, some unspeakably sad ("Happy birthday Christy, Another birthday wreath from Granny"), others simple and heartfelt ("Aug 4 1995 Iowa will not forget. God Bless You All!"). Still another note, written with somehow charming simplicity on a freight company's bill of lading, reads: "God Bless all those who perished in this senseless act. All of us in Houston pray for you. P.S. This delivery free!"

One wonders if our desire for personal association with the newsworthy is a modern phenomenon. Did travelers to Chicago a hundred years ago venture to the site of the Haymarket bombing? Did lines of the curious cruise through Lakehurst after the *Hindenburg* blew up? Most cities have a monument to their war dead, but these are tributes more to a cause than to the soldiers themselves.

The phenomenon of mourning the loss of strangers is heightened by television, which creates a sense of intimacy while leaving us alone in our living rooms. Saturation news coverage of events like the Oklahoma City bombing makes us feel we know a place, from having seen it so often. We call victims by their first names (Ron and Nicole, for example); often we are introduced to their parents or shown their home movies. Perhaps, then, it is not the macabre that draws the curious, but the familiar.

This is what keeps the T-shirts and bumper stickers from coming across as a cynical attempt to profit from tragedy. We don't know each other, although we seem to think we do, and so our only means of communication is the personal advertisement or the note on the fence. In an unashamed way, the commercial becomes a vehicle for the personal. And what one reads in these messages is not rancor or vindictiveness, but pride in the living, that people responded to catastrophe the way they had hoped they would.

There is also a note of resiliency. The Methodist Church will have to be demolished, but a structure called the Heartland Chapel has been erected in the parking lot. Communion is every Sunday at 8 A.M.; during the rest of the week, visitors rest or say a prayer. Above them, along the façade of the ruined church, a new banner proclaims: "Our God Reigns and We Will Remain." □

Mark F. Bernstein *is an attorney with Hoyle, Morris, and Kerr in Philadelphia.*

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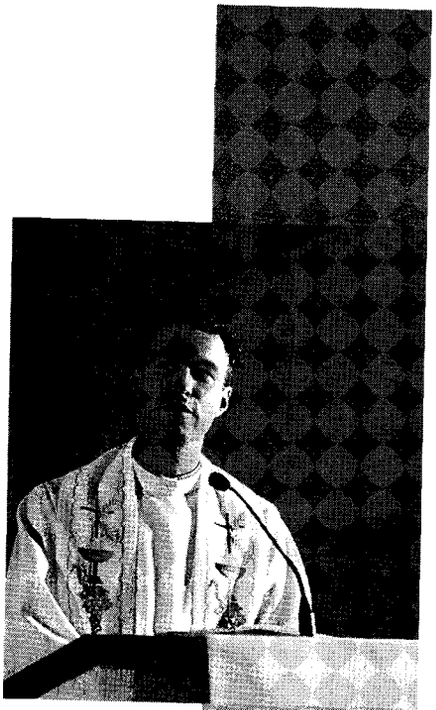

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